

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Joint Ocean Commission on Wednesday released its third annual report card on progress being made to implement recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission. The group gave the country a C, suggesting that state and regional successes on ocean policy have been offset by lack of federal action. However, the report adds that passage of national ocean legislation, particularly Congressman Sam Farr's Oceans-21 bill, would be a constructive step.

"I've lived my entire life on California's beautiful coast, and for 30 years I have advocated for ways to protect our oceans and keep them safe for future generations," said Rep. Farr (D-Carmel). "The bipartisan Joint Ocean Commission has offered us a slate of smart, common sense recommendations for ocean management and conservation, and we must implement these proposals as soon as possible."

Rep. Farr played a key role in passage of the Oceans Act of 2000, which established the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. He is also co-chair of the House Oceans Caucus, created to promote ocean issues and advance the commission's recommendations.

Toward that end, Rep. Farr introduced the Ocean Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act (known as Oceans-21) last year and continues to advocate for its passage. The Joint Ocean Commission singled out this bill, H.R. 21, as a big step Congress could take toward effective ocean policy. The bill is primed for action in the House Committee on Natural Resources soon.

The legislation is the product of a multi-year effort within the Oceans Caucus to draft bipartisan legislation based on Joint Ocean Commission recommendations. Key environmental and oceans groups and the Joint Ocean Commission support the bill.

"Advocates in Congress and around the country have been working on Oceans-21 for years, and I'm excited that we'll be taking it up soon," Rep. Farr said. "Our mishmash of ocean policies has treaded water for too long, and its' time we pull them into the 21st century."

The bill would create a national ocean policy, establishing principles for use and management of U.S. coasts, oceans and Great Lakes. The bill would promote ecosystem-based, regional governance and encourage ocean stewardship through education, data sharing and citizen involvement. It would also codify the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and establish an Oceans and Great Lakes Conservation Trust Fund.

More information on the report card can be found online at www.jointoceancommission.com .

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